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FM IRAN RPO DUBAI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0268  
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 IRAN RPO DUBAI 000025

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/27/2018

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SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVES DOMINATE IRANIAN PARLIAMENTARY RUNOFFS, AS  
EXPECTED

REF: RPO DUBAI 0008, 0012, 0013, 0015

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CLASSIFIED BY: Ramin Asgard, Acting Director, Iran Regional  
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REASON: 1.4 (d)

1.(SBU) Summary: The April 25 runoff elections for the Iranian Majles (parliament) confirmed that the newly-elected Majles will be dominated by conservatives, as expected. The results of the runoff elections do not represent any significant changes from the results of the first round, held March 14. Final results announced by the Interior Ministry indicate that conservatives have won 58% of seats in the 290-member body. Reformists gained six seats over the 40 they held in the outgoing Majles, winning close to 16% of seats in this year's elections. Independents won 24% of the seats. (Note: Domestic press quoted the Interior Minister stating that conservatives won 69% of seats, however some independents were included in that figure. End note.) In the important Tehran constituency, conservatives won 10 of the 11 remaining contested seats, with the other seat going to a reformist. According to the Interior Ministry, voter turnout in Friday's runoff elections was 26%.

2.(C) Summary continued: Although these elections will have little direct bearing on Iranian foreign or nuclear policy, they will be relevant to Iranian domestic policy-particularly economic policy-as we enter the final year of President Ahmadinejad's first term. Once the new Majles takes office May 27, their first order of business will be to elect the Majles Presidium, the speaker and two deputy speakers. The holders of these influential positions can shape the tone of relations between the new Majles and the president. There is a good likelihood that current Majles speaker Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel will retain the position in the new Majles, although former Supreme National Security Council (SNCS) secretary Ali Larijani is reported to have his sights on the position as well. Both men have had public differences of opinion with the president and could use the forum of the speakership to continue criticizing Ahmadinejad. End summary.

Nation-wide and Tehran results

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13. (C) Conservatives dominated the April 25 runoff elections for the Iranian Majles, as expected. The results of the runoff

elections do not represent any significant changes from the results of the first round, held on March 14, in which conservatives also won the majority of seats. According to results released by the Interior Ministry, the two main conservative groups (UFP and BPCP) together took 170 of the 290 total seats in the Majles, giving conservatives 58% of the Majles. (Note: Domestic press cited outgoing Interior Minister Purmohammadi April 26 giving slightly different statistics, saying that conservatives will hold 69% of seats in the 290-member parliament, with 16% going to reformists and 14% to independents. However, some independents were included in the 69% figure. End note.) Interior Minister Purmohammadi reported a 26% voter turnout in the April 25 runoff elections.

4.(C) The United Front of Principle-ists (UFP) has been associated in the press with President Ahmadinejad. However, the UFP list also includes some of the president's conservative critics, including Elias Naderan, the top Tehran vote-getter in Friday's runoff elections. The UFP won 27 seats in the runoff, adding to the 90 seats they won in the first round. This gives the UFP 40% of total seats in the Majles. In Tehran, ten conservatives and one reformist won the remaining 11 Majles seats in that constituency. All of the ten conservatives are from the UFP.

5.(C) A separate group formed by Ahmadinejad's conservative opponents (Broad and Popular Coalition of Principle-ists, BPCP) won 11 seats, adding to the 42 won in the first round, giving them 18% of total seats. The BPCP was led by a triumvirate of conservative critics of President Ahmadinejad: former Supreme National Security Council secretary Larijani (who was elected to a seat in Qom in the first round), former IRGC commander Rezaie, and Tehran Mayor Qalibaf. (Note: Rezaie and Qalibaf did not run in the Majles elections. End note.)

6.(C) Reformists won at least 15 additional seats above the 31 from the first round, giving them close to 16% of seats. The results of three seats were reportedly annulled by the Interior Ministry for unspecified reasons. (Note: It is not clear how

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the final results for those three seats will be determined. End note.) If the results for the reformist seats are accurate, these elections gave the reformists a net gain of 6 seats over the 40 seats they held in the outgoing Majles. Independents added 32 seats to the 39 from the first round, giving independents 24% of seats in the new Majles. There are a greater number of independents in this Majles, and it is difficult to determine their political affiliations. If a significant portion of these independents are reformist-leaning, they could add strength to the reformist minority.

Next step: Election of Majles leadership positions

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17. (S) Once the new Majles takes office on May 27, their first order of business will be to elect the Majles Presidium, the speaker and two deputy speakers. After that, the chairs of the various parliamentary committees will be selected. The Presidium and committee chairs are influential positions, and provide venues for public debate and possibly criticism of the president's policies. It will be noteworthy whether many prominent critics of Ahmadinejad gain leadership positions. According to one Tehran-based political analyst, current Majles speaker Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel will likely be elected to the position again, out of respect, but with expectations that he will drop out to run for president in 2009, at which time Larijani would take the speakership.

8.(C) Comment: Although these Majles elections will have little direct bearing on Iranian foreign or nuclear policy, they will be relevant to Iranian domestic policy-particularly economic policy-as we enter the final year of President Ahmadinejad's

first term. However, some MPs may use parliament as a venue to highlight the negative economic impact of Ahmadinejad's foreign and nuclear policies on domestic economic conditions. As the analyst suggests, there is indeed a good likelihood that current Majles speaker Haddad-Adel will retain the position in the new Majles, although Iranian press has reported that Larijani has been lobbying for the position as well. Both men have had public differences of opinion with the president and could use the forum of the speakership to continue criticizing Ahmadinejad. Analysis of the significance of the Majles elections and results of the first round were reported in reftels. End comment.

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